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ABSTRACT

Service-learning gives school administrators a powerful tool to achieve some of their most important goals: educating students to high levels, connecting with the community, and preparing students to be active participants in the world around them. This issue paper examines why administrators support service-learning as a key element in school improvement, what questions they may need to address, and how administrators can support and strengthen service-learning in their schools. Includes definitions, research results, anecdotes, and strategies. Contains 12 references and 15 resources. (BT)

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*Issue Paper*

SERVICE-LEARNING

Compact for Learning and Citizenship

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# SERVICE-LEARNING: AN ADMINISTRATOR'S TOOL FOR IMPROVING SCHOOLS AND CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

## *Introduction*

What should students know and be able to do by the time they graduate high school? This basic question is at the heart of most education reforms in recent years. Increasingly, the answer lies not just in strong academic skills but also in a sense of self and the individual's role in supporting and building a vibrant community.

As schools seek ways to connect students with the world around them, community service in schools is on the rise. A recent study by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) shows that 83% of high schools in this country offer community service opportunities, up from 27% in 1984. In fact, NCES predicts that more than 13 million students in North America will be engaged in community service by next year.

But service alone is not enough to meet schools' goal of turning out educated students and thoughtful citizens. When service is integrated into rigorous curriculum and schools give students an opportunity and a framework to reflect on their experience, service-learning becomes a powerful tool for connecting students and their communities.

School and district administrators play a central role in ensuring that service-learning is at the core of achieving education reform goals. This Education Commission of the States *Issue Paper* examines why administrators support service-learning as a key element in school improvement, what questions they may need to address, and how administrators can support and strengthen service-learning in their schools.[1]

Service-learning integrates service to the school or community into a thoughtfully organized curriculum. In service-learning:

- Young people are encouraged to take the lead, at a level appropriate to their age and skills, in responding to genuine needs in their school or community.
- Teachers facilitate a service experience that relates the academic subject to community life.
- Service opportunities are accompanied by regular, structured and unstructured opportunities to reflect upon the meaning and significance of their service.
- Service-learning is built on partnerships within the school or between the school and community.

[1]This *Issue Paper* is based partly on a workshop and conversation with teachers and administrators led by Sheldon Berman, superintendent, Hudson (Massachusetts) Public Schools; Randall Collins, superintendent, Waterford (Connecticut) Public Schools; and Terry Pickeral, director, Compact for Learning and Citizenship.

"It [service-learning] creates a web that's very satisfying for administrators. Sometimes the higher up you go the further you get from the students. Service-learning is a way for administrators to connect with their teaching colleagues, students and community. It is a great vehicle for people in the day-to-day cycle of administrative duties to say, 'This is why I'm in education! This makes it come alive!'"

*— Jennifer Ryley Welsh, Learning Through Service coordinator, Waterford (Connecticut) High School*

## *Why Should Administrators Support Service-Learning as a Key Element in School Improvement?*

The short answer to this question is that service-learning gives administrators an efficient and effective way to meet some of their most pressing goals. "Service-learning has the potential to create safe schools, reconnect the public to public education, address academic learning outcomes, develop a new generation of citizens and reignite the spirit in each classroom teacher," says Terry Pickeral, director of the Compact for Learning and Citizenship, the Education Commission of the States' service-learning initiative.

### Academic excellence

Naturally, the school's primary focus is on academic achievement. When well done, service-learning helps schools advance academic outcomes by engaging both students and teachers in a cycle in which learning, action and reflection feed into and lead back to one another.

Service-learning boosts student engagement and achievement by giving students a chance to see the relevance of their classroom studies. Because service-learning programs include all students, the benefits extend not just to "gifted-and-talented" or "at-risk" children but to all young people. Teachers, too, find service-learning not only an effective teaching tool but also one that makes their job more effective and satisfying.

Standards and assessments are critical issues in schools across the country. There, too, service-learning helps advance the issues schools already are working on. Because service-learning initiatives are developed locally, they easily can be aligned with individual state or district standards. And service-learning provides an excellent arena for performance assessment by giving students an opportunity to demonstrate their learning in a hands-on and meaningful context.

"Service-learning provides a context for talking about learning in terms of not only what students know but what they are able to do," says Dale Kinsley, superintendent of schools in Bellingham, Washington. "Most of school reform involves getting students to do more critical thinking, communicate ideas more comprehensively and problem solve in more complex situations than just memorizing and repeating what they've learned. Service involves students in more complicated issues outside the classroom and allows them to put together information they need to gather in order to solve the problem. It's active, engaged learning, which is really what school reform should be about."

"Acts of civic decency are important, but citizenship in a democratic society requires more than kindness. To become truly effective citizens, students (especially those in high school) have to learn how to create, evaluate, criticize and change public norms, institutions and programs."

*— Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne, "Service Learning Required," Education Week, January 26, 2000*

Finally, service-learning can help promote critical-thinking skills by requiring students to analyze and reflect on their experience. Serving soup to homeless people is service. When students return to their homes and classrooms to ask questions about why there are homeless people and what the possible solutions might be, they are engaged in service-learning.

### Student development

Another vital function of service-learning is to help students develop as individuals and community members. On the individual level, service-learning encourages character education and helps young people develop values. Through age-appropriate service experiences, students can develop not only their sense of

personal self-worth and competence, but also the sense that they have value in their school and community. They learn that their personal boundaries can span neighborhoods and generations.

Kenn Robinson, director of student services in Bellingham, Washington, describes his experience with service-learning as a middle school principal: "It was great to see the impact on kids. It is one of the first times they begin to see that 'I am an individual. I can have impact. I can be listened to.'"

Students also may find that their service-learning experiences open new doors for them in terms of careers. In some cases, the service experience allows students to be better positioned for scholarships or internships. And, in other cases, service-learning simply introduces students to fields they would not have explored otherwise. Randall Collins, Waterford, Connecticut, schools superintendent, tells the story of a young man who performed service-learning in a nursing home. He enjoyed the work so much he got a job there right out of high school — a connection neither he nor those who knew him would have suggested had it not been for his service-learning experience.

On the interpersonal level, many service-learning projects provide students with opportunities to get along with one another, to cooperate and collaborate. Service-learning also can address issues of safety and violence. Students who perpetrate serious acts of school violence often say they feel alienated from schoolmates and their school or community. Service-learning provides a concrete connection between students and their community and allows them to see firsthand that caring about others makes a difference. (For more information, see *Service-Learning: An Education Strategy for Preventing School Violence*, Education Commission of the States, 1999, www.ecs.org.)

"Schools and districts that have institutionalized service-learning see the results by higher rates of attendance, better academic achievement and lower at-risk behavior, regardless of what goes on at home," comments JoAnn Johnson, intervention specialist and coordinator for service-learning in Bellingham Washington. "So, for an administrator, supporting service-learning should help them reach their essential learning goals as well as see reduction in things like discipline, truancy and absenteeism, all of which take up huge amounts of time for administrators."

On a community — or even nationwide level — service-learning can promote civic understanding, participation and citizenship. Service-learning is a highly effective way for young people to assume the mantle of citizenship in a sequence of progressive responsibilities. And, unlike some citizenship education programs, service-learning can be assessed through written work based on the student's service experience.

> "If you believe schools have any role in developing citizens, intelligent voters in tomorrow's world, you want to have them active in the community and see the impact of their action."
>
> — *Randall Collins, superintendent, Waterford (Connecticut) Public Schools*

**School-community relations**

Service-learning meets several administrators' needs with regard to their community. For instance, service-learning is a good vehicle for contacting the community in a positive, proactive way. In addition to giving the school access to financial and service resources in the community, having a network of partnerships gives principals a ready supply of programs and projects that can help keep schools from feeling disconnected from real needs.

School-community partnerships can be of tremendous benefit to both partners, allowing each to learn from the other. When partnerships are established, educators and students find they understand the workings of their communities in new ways. Similarly, when community members see how service is connected to learning, they often come to a new understanding of what is actually happening in their schools. That understanding may translate into greater support for school funding, as well as in classroom connections to the community.

Sheldon Berman, superintendent of schools in Hudson, Massachusetts, found service-learning to be a crucial tool for reconnecting schools and communities. "When I came into Hudson Public Schools seven years ago,



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the school board wanted academic performance, but there was ongoing conflict between the school and the community over budgets and other issues," says Berman. "One of the reasons I proposed community service-learning was to build a better relationship with the community. The senior citizens feared kids on the streets. The community didn't know what was going on in the schools. Community service-learning put the community back in touch with the schools. It brought public engagement back into the schools."

Service-learning allows both schools and communities to support each other in their areas of need. But it also allows both community and school to showcase their strengths. Each school has talented faculty and staff members who may have the background and expertise to solve specific community problems. There are community members or institutions well-suited to help address issues the schools are facing. And community members who have worked with students on service-learning projects often find a new respect and appreciation for these young people.

## *What Questions Might an Administrator Be Asked About Service-Learning?*

### Does service-learning work?

Service-learning is an idea that simply makes sense to many educators and community members. Anecdotal evidence points strongly to the value of service-learning efforts (several stories are collected in *Service-Learning in Action: Voices From the Field*, Education Commission of the States, 1999). But is there research to back it up? The research on service-learning (Brandeis, 1998; Hedin and Conrad, 1990) shows that students who take part in service-learning strengthen their academic and citizenship skills and their civic attitudes. In addition, there is evidence that service-learning provides the key experiences that lead to resiliency (Sagor, 1996) and help develop a sense of social responsibility (Berman, 1997).

**Research: Service-Learning's Impacts on Students, Schools and Communities**

RMC Research Corporation recently produced a compilation of evidence from the past 10 years on the impacts service-learning has on students, schools and communities (Billig, 2000). The research is arranged by impacts on students' personal and social development, youth civic responsibility and citizenship, academic learning, and career exploration and aspirations.

The results included the following:

- Service-learning helps students acquire academic skills and knowledge.
- Students are more engaged in their studies and more motivated to learn.
- Student attendance improves.
- Students become more knowledgeable and realistic about careers.
- Teachers and students have greater respect for each other.
- School climate improves.
- Service-learning leads to discussions of teaching and learning and best ways for students to learn.
- Students are less likely to engage in risky behaviors.
- Service-learning has a positive effect on students' interpersonal development and the ability to relate to culturally diverse groups.
- Service-learning helps develop students' sense of civic and social responsibility as well as their citizenship skills.
- Service-learning provides an avenue for students to become active, positive contributors to society.
- Service-learning leads to more positive perceptions of school and youth by community members.

### Does service-learning conflict with course content?

Some people worry service-learning is not academically challenging or that it takes time away from other important parts of the curriculum. In fact, service-learning is academically challenging and enriching because it gives both students and teachers an opportunity to integrate their classroom work with important school or community issues and needs. The practical experience of service-learning often gets students more engaged in the material they are learning and leads them to a deeper understanding.

"What really helped us initially was we were able to latch onto the vision of a couple of senior teachers at the high school who began to move it [service-learning]. Many times senior teachers are seen as being comfortable with the status quo. I don't think that's true. When you get a senior history teacher seeing service-learning as a better way to teach history, such as having students interview people in the town about their history and produc-ing a story, it goes a long way toward building the curriculum."

*— Randall Collins, superintendent, Waterford (Connecticut) Public Schools*

**Is this a burden on already overloaded teachers?**

Teachers often feel overwhelmed by the many tasks expected of them. Rather than being an additional burden, however, service-learning gives teachers a way to accomplish their goals of making learning effective, exciting and engaging. For a principal or superintendent, service-learning can be a way to support faculty creativity and build their autonomy.

It is true that when service-learning initiatives are getting under way, teachers need professional development time to learn how best to connect service to academics and how to develop projects in the community. But most school and district staffs have found that once the service-learning effort is under way, the time investment for teachers is no different from preparing for any other activity. Many teachers believe that students get so much mileage from service-learning that it is well worth the investment of time and energy. In fact, teachers often are service-learning's biggest proponents.

**What happens when service-learning is led by a few interested teachers, not the whole district?**

Widespread support for service-learning is ideal, but there is no question that, in many places, such support began with the work of a few interested and dedicated teachers. When teachers and students see the effects of service-learning, the excitement tends to spread. They provide the start that can lead to the goals of giving students regular, meaningful experiences with service and developing a commitment to being involved. These leader teachers also can provide valuable input into how to institutionalize service-learning by developing a regular scope and sequence that fits well with the curriculum.

**Principal and Teachers Lead Service-Learning Effort**

*Kenn Robinson describes how he worked with teachers to kick off service-learning efforts when he was principal of a Bellingham, Washington, middle school:*

Some discussions around service-learning were just beginning to pop up among four or five of the core teachers. I had been doing some reading about service-learning, anyway, so I sat down with them one day at lunch, joined the conversation and away we went. The teachers wrote a grant for a small amount of money, about $6,000, to initiate service-learning as part of the curriculum in the 7th and 8th grades in our school.

They won the grant and started service-learning as part of the 8th grade curriculum. At that time, it was very heavily organized by teachers and parent volunteers who helped on things like choosing project sites and job shadowing. The students went to their service-learning sites for seven weeks and integrated it into the curriculum through journal writing, examining issues the service raised and doing final summary projects. Then we had celebration night where the students made presentations, thanked their parents and site coordinators, and gave speeches about what they had learned. I remember a girl who had not said two words all year. She got up and gave an incredibly moving speech — the whole room was electrified.

**Should the school require students to perform service to their community?**

Some parents and other community members may worry that asking or requiring students to do service-learning is inappropriate because it goes beyond the school's mandate or is perceived as "forced volunteerism." A crucial difference between volunteering and service-learning is that service-learning is integrated into the curriculum and requires that the students reflect on their service work. In fact, service-learning is not a volunteer activity at all, but a deliberate education strategy designed to help schools accomplish two of their primary missions, teaching students to high standards and preparing them to be competent citizens.

Most service-learning programs connect service directly to the curriculum or provide voluntary service opportunities. Some, however, require hours of service for graduation. In Waterford, Connecticut, high

school students must do 80 hours of service-learning to graduate. Collins reports that, since the program began in 1997, the district has never had a student fail to graduate simply because of the service-learning requirement. "I don't have any hang-up with the mandatory nature of service-learning any more than we require four years of English," Collins says. "No, it's not volunteerism. It's 80 hours of community service." (For more information on this subject, see *Mandatory Community Service: Citizenship Education or Involuntary Servitude?*, Education Commission of the States, 1999, www.ecs.org).

**Will parents support service-learning?**

Some parents have concerns about service-learning that range from adequate supervision of children to integration into the curriculum to possible conflicts with religious or moral values. Much of this concern comes from misunderstanding service-learning and assuming that the service always takes the shape of volunteering outside the school. In fact, service-learning often takes place within the context of the school, such as serving as "reading buddies" or working with disabled children.

Having policies about the level of involvement by competent adults and teachers helps alleviate concerns as well. One strategy that has worked well in some districts is to monitor the number of hours students serve, but give students latitude in their choice of service. By requiring that service only be to a nonprofit entity, for instance, students are free to follow their interests and conscience in choosing a service-learning project.

Whether service is internal or external, clear support from administrators, educators, and other school and community members can help defuse controversy. In addition, parents' concerns can be an excellent opportunity to involve them in identifying community needs and appropriate ways to remedy them through school-community partnerships.

Once service-learning is under way, everyone may be surprised at the level of parent support. "Understand that it's work, but also understand there's a huge payoff at the end of that work, and not just for teachers and kids," says Bellingham's Robinson. "We didn't go into it with the intention of meeting needs of parents, but they just love it. It does a lot to build support in the community for the school."

**Survey Shows Parents Support Service-Learning**

The Hudson (Massachusetts) Public Schools surveyed parents to assess what they most value and how they perceive the public schools' achievement on 50 indicators of school system success. More than one-third of parents responded, with replies about the importance of positive social development and service-learning standing out. Between 80-90% of parents indicated that they highly value "a student body that demonstrates concern for the well-being of others," "a student body that demonstrates pride in their community" and "a student body involved in community service."

**PARENT ATTITUDES RELATED TO SERVICE-LEARNING**

| INDICATOR | LEVEL OF VALUE | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Low | Medium | High |
| A student body that demonstrates pride in their community | 0.9% | 11.5% | 87.5% |
| A student body involved in community service | 1.2% | 16.8% | 82.1% |
| A student body that demonstrates concern for well-being of others | 1.1% | 9.5% | 89.4% |

These findings were echoed in a shorter survey of the entire community in fall 1999. Results of that survey found that "a student body that demonstrates concern for the well-being of others and the environment" was second only to academics in the degree of importance it had to community members. These data suggest that parents and community members have a strong interest in the school's promoting social development through service-learning.

**Does service-learning expose schools to additional liability?**

This question may arise when people think of service-learning as occurring outside the schools. In fact, as noted above, many service-learning projects can be conducted in the context of the school environment.

When they do require out-of-school experiences, the liability is the same as that of a supervised field trip. The key to reducing the risk of liability in these situations is well-organized experiences with sufficient adult supervision.

## *How Can Administrators Support, Strengthen and Sustain Service-Learning Efforts?*

As mentioned earlier, service-learning can be a powerful tool for both the school and community when it becomes part of the school fabric. That integration involves ongoing professional development, collaborative planning, institutionalized teacher leadership and strong administrative support. Here are some ways principals and superintendents have found to demonstrate their support for and strengthen service-learning efforts.

### Provide leadership

- Include service-learning in the district vision, mission statement, district goals or strategic plan. See the example below.

> **Hudson (Massachusetts) Public Schools Mission Statement**
> Our goal is to promote the intellectual, ethical and social development of students through a challenging instructional program and a caring classroom and school environment.
>
> **One of Hudson's strategic goals:**
> Continue to develop curricularly based, community service-learning and leadership training experiences that nurture an ethic of caring, enhance basic skills, develop leadership skills and encourage involvement in decisionmaking.

- Develop a district policy framework for defining and supporting service-learning. The Bellingham, Washington, district has woven the definition and endorsement of service-learning practices into policies on curriculum, instruction, community relations and student activities.
- Work with the school board to build members' understanding and support.
- Allow deviations to traditional scheduling to support service-learning (e.g., block scheduling to allow sufficient time for activities, as well as planning time for teachers).
- Take the lead in finding the natural connections between service-learning and other programs, such as English as a Second Language, Title I and migrant education.
- Examine current policies to see if there are any that may inadvertently inhibit service-learning practice.
- Invite students involved in service-learning to do presentations about their efforts to statewide meetings of school boards and superintendents.

> **Superintendent Helps Lead the Way**
>
> Sometimes, the most important role an administrator can play is not in a specific service-learning project but with his or her own colleagues, clearing the way for service-learning and helping those who are putting it in place.
>
> In Hudson, Massachusetts, Superintendent Sheldon Berman recognized the centrality of teachers in service-learning efforts. He gathered a group of teachers to form a Community Service-Learning (CSL) Leadership Team which planned inservice programs, developed a mini-grant program, secured grants, developed an introductory service-learning packet for each teacher, and provided planning and oversight for the district's service-learning efforts. Berman chaired the team initially and continues to serve on the committee.
>
> After the CSL Leadership Team had generated voluntary support from all schools in the district, Berman helped build continuity between grades and schools by setting an expectation for principals that all teachers find a way to integrate service-learning into their classes. He also supported using curriculum time for systemwide service-learning planning and worked with the local school board to ensure members' support. Berman's leadership has paid off — Hudson has integrated service-learning into the curriculum districtwide.

### Allocate time, money and other resources

- Create an organizational infrastructure for service-learning. In many districts, this takes the form of a districtwide coordinator.

- Fund service-learning efforts. Some districts provide money directly to schools for service-learning projects, for example, mini-grants to teachers to create new service-learning initiatives. A budget item for service-learning is as clear as any policy statement that the district has put its support behind service-learning.
- Make sure budgetary support includes transportation to and from service activities. Bus companies often will join in the spirit of a service-learning program and donate a number of trips to support the effort.
- Provide time and grantwriting expertise to help secure grants to fund service-learning activities.
- Create service-learning reference and resource kits for each school library with teacher guidelines for projects, a "brainstorming" list of good ideas and a list of local organizations.
- Involve curriculum specialists in understanding service-learning.
- Review literature within and outside the traditional education literature base to keep abreast of research that supports service-learning practice, and communicate this information both within and outside the school.

> "I wanted to teach because I wanted to make a difference in the world. Service-learning brings teachers back to why they entered teaching."
> — *Sheldon Berman, superintendent, Hudson (Massachusetts) Public Schools*

**Develop and support teachers**

- When starting new service-learning efforts, be realistic about how much time and energy they will require.
- Establish a districtwide committee with representatives from each school to provide support for teachers and direction for the district or school's program.
- Create systems of professional development and support. Dedicate inservice training days to service-learning and hold continuing study group and reflection meetings for teachers. Help teachers see what is possible and how they might structure service-learning for their own classes.
- Support the use of curriculum time to develop and sustain service-learning projects.
- Use curriculum coordination meetings to build consistency across schools and grade levels, ensure that service-learning programs include adequate preparation and reflection, and address how service-learning efforts are meeting district and state standards.
- Consistently and clearly encourage teachers to make sure service is tied to the classroom and rigorous academic skills.
- Provide mini-grants to teachers to support new initiatives as well as summer curriculum funds to support curriculum development.
- Build collaborative projects among grade levels so all teachers across the school are involved in one project.
- Establish a peer-mentoring program that links experienced teachers with those doing service-learning for the first time.
- Support a study group for teachers at the building level, as well as the district level.
- Make service-learning an integral component in hiring new teachers.
- Provide a service-learning orientation program for new teachers.
- Include service-learning in annual teacher evaluations.

**Work with state leaders**

A crucial role for school and district leaders is to work with policymakers at the state level. Support of the governor, state legislature, state department of education and board of education should be requested. That support can be demonstrated in a number of ways, including the following:

- Recognize and publicize outstanding service-learning efforts in the state. In addition to rewarding schools that excel, focusing the spotlight on these schools raises the awareness level about service-learning statewide and lets interested educators and administrators know who to turn to for help.
- Incorporate service-learning into comprehensive school reform efforts.
- Conduct a statewide policy scan to find programs (i.e., special education, drug-free schools, Title I) where service-learning is a good fit and communicate that information to the local level.

- Support efforts to seek discretionary federal and foundation funding for service-learning activities.
- Designate a coordinator of statewide service-learning initiatives.
- Work with school districts and teacher education institutions to develop and provide service-learning training opportunities for educators.
- Support a statewide network of experienced service-learning educators.
- Maintain a central source of data on service-learning programs and strategies.

"Our superintendent helps facilitate connections between Waterford and the state education leadership. It ties us in with state initiatives, even though we're not officially labeled a priority district. When we come up to the Capitol, they know us because of the service-learning."

*— Jennifer Ryley Welsh, Learning Through Service coordinator, Waterford (Connecticut) High School*

**Build partnerships**

- Partner with local businesses and institutions of higher education who can provide interns and volunteers to help schools organize and run service-learning projects.
- Build and sustain school-community partnerships. Businesses can assist with school-to-work learning projects, and a network of social service and health agencies can help coordinate service-learning activities.
- Make parent knowledge and support a priority. A newsletter, Web site and forums are excellent vehicles for keeping in touch with the community.

**Recognize and celebrate**

- Identify, promote and celebrate service-learning projects and the people who make them happen. Recognition can come through talks to local service clubs, district newsletters and publications, local newspaper stories, board meeting presentations and district awards.
- Make sure information about service-learning activities is regularly communicated to the district's communications department. Also make sure everyone knows that sharing information on service-learning activities with the public is a priority.
- Present service awards to students at school graduation ceremonies to highlight their importance. Ask leading political figures — state or federal representative or senator, city council member, mayor, etc. — to present the awards and speak about the importance of public service and social and political involvement. This affirms and strengthens the district's program and its image within the community, while at the same time building a strong base of support on a local or state level.
- Set aside a school board meeting for a service-learning exposition where projects are displayed and parents and community members are invited to learn about students' efforts.
- Foster student leadership by hosting student conferences and summer institutes on the student's role in service-learning.

**Service-learning in Action**

*Jennifer Ryley Welsh, Learning Through Service coordinator in Waterford, Connecticut, tells the story of one service-learning project and the administrators' role:*

Administrators play a key role in "Meet the Candidates," a yearly project in one of our Contemporary Affairs classes. Students research issues surrounding elections, such as how the process works and what a primary is. Then they seek out candidates in a current election and entice them to come to a debate that's televised for the community. The students do everything – issue invitations, write questions, do the taping at the school's television studio, set up the podium, set rules, act as timekeepers, ask questions and facilitate during the debate. Students provide a vital service to the community by offering citizens the opportunity to meet with the candidates, listen to their views and ask the questions that are most important to them.

Last year, we had a debate for candidates for first selectman [similar to mayor]. Ours was one of only two forums where the candidates would agree to come together. In the next town over they did a similar kind of thing and one candidate said 'no,' which may have cost him the election. The debate was broadcast right before the election on the community channel, which many people here watch. Even those who may not have kids in school find it really informative to find out what's going on in school. Plus, this was one of the only chances for people to see the candidates head-to-head.

The principal and superintendent were very supportive and made sure students had whatever they needed for the project. Everywhere [the principal and superintendent] went, they spoke about "Meet the Candidates." Finally, they were there the day of the taping. It was a great place for [them] to be visible because of the community connections, and their support helped make the event a success.

## *Conclusion*

Service-learning gives school administrators a powerful tool to achieve some of their most important goals — educating students to high levels, connecting with the community and preparing students to be active participants in the world around them. While some people may have concerns about service-learning, a clear understanding of what service-learning is and how it works can allay most fears. While placing service-learning at the heart of the school takes effort, it creates a positive climate within the school and a positive relationship between the school and the community that makes parents and the community proud of their schools.

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## *Resources*

Several organizations support service-learning with funding and/or technical assistance.

Compact for Learning and Citizenship
Education Commission of the States
www.ecs.org
303-299-3644

American Association of School Administrators (AASA)
www.aasa.org
703-528-0700

Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
www.ascd.org
800-933-ASCD

Campus Compact
www.compact.org
401-863-1119

Constitutional Rights Foundation
www.crf-usa.org
213-487-5590

Corporation for National Service
www.cns.gov
202-606-5000

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
www.ccsso.org
202-408-5505

Learn and Serve America Exchange
www.lsaexchange@nylc.org
800-572-3924

Learning In Deed: Making a Difference Through Service-Learning
An Initiative of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation
www.learningindeed.com
202-778-1040

National Dropout Prevention Center
www.dropoutprevention.org
864-656-2599

National Peer-Based Service-Learning Training and Technical Assistance Exchange
www.lsaexchange.org
877-572-3924

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
www.nicsl.coled.umn.edu
800-808-7378

National Youth Leadership Council
www.nylc.org
651-631-3672

RMC Research
www.rmcdenver.com
303-825-3636

U.S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov
800-USA-LEARN

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## *For More Information*

The Compact for Learning and Citizenship (CLC), the service-learning initiative of the Education Commission of the States, provides K-12 school leaders, legislators and other education stakeholders with resources, profiles and strategies to integrate service-learning through practice and policy. District superintendents and chief state school officers are invited to join. The CLC Web site (www.ecs.org) also provides links to other organizations, clearinghouses, publications and resources. Contact Terry Pickeral, project director, at 303-299-3636 or tpickeral@ecs.org, or Lou Myers, project coordinator, 303-299-3644 or lmyers@ecs.org.

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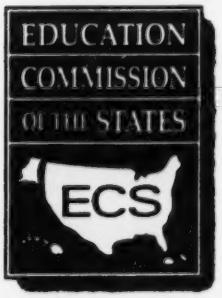


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